United Nations A/61/PV.101

General Assembly

Sixty-first session

Official Records

101 st plenary meeting
Wednesday, 30 May 2007, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 4

Election of the President of the General Assembly

Election of the President of the General Assembly for the sixty-second session

The President: In accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I now invite members of the General Assembly to proceed to the election of the President of the General Assembly for the sixty-second session.

May I recall that, in accordance with paragraph 1 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 33/138 of 19 December 1978, the President of the General Assembly for the sixty-second session should be elected from among the Eastern European States.

In that connection, I was informed by the Chairman of the Group of Eastern European States for the month of November 2006 that the group has endorsed His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the presidency of the General Assembly for the sixty-second session.

Taking into account the provisions of paragraph 16 of annex VI to the rules of procedure, I therefore declare His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia elected by acclamation President of the General Assembly for the sixty-second session.

I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. His election as President of the General Assembly for its sixty-second session is recognition of his personal qualities and his consistent efforts to promote peace and stability, values the United Nations holds dear.

Mr. Kerim has direct experience of the importance of multilateralism in resolving political disputes. He can bring his significant political experience at both the national and the international levels, in addition to a distinguished career in the private sector and the academy, to his leadership of the Assembly.

Holding high office is not new to Mr. Kerim. He has held several senior ministerial positions over the past two decades. And, having recently served his country as its Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Mr. Kerim is very familiar with the inner workings of the Organization and with the dynamics of this House. Mr. Kerim can bring this rich set of intellectual and leadership experience in strategic positions in both the public and private sector to his guidance of the work of the General Assembly.

It will be his task to manage a number of important ongoing reforms that are vital to the future of the Organization. Strength of character, tireless commitment and determined leadership will be necessary to facilitate compromise and foster greater trust among Member States.

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I am confident that all Member States will work together flexibly and constructively under Mr. Kerim's leadership to ensure a successful outcome of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

Continuity of leadership is an essential aspect of the revitalization and relevance of the work of the General Assembly. I will work closely with Mr. Kerim during the transitional period to ensure that his presidency gets off to an excellent start.

I wish Mr. Kerim every success.

It is my pleasure to invite His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President-elect of the General Assembly for its sixty-second session, to take the floor.

Mr. Kerim (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): This is an overwhelming moment for me. I am deeply honoured to have been elected President of the General Assembly for its sixty-second session. It is with my sincerest thanks that I express my appreciation to all Member States for their unanimous endorsement. My special acknowledgement goes to the Eastern European Group for its unswerving support.

Allow me to commend the President of the General Assembly, Ms. Al-Khalifa, for her leadership and accomplishments. She has built on the 2005 World Summit, in particular bolstering the United Nations role in peace and security, strengthening the Economic and Social Council and elaborating possible building blocks for negotiations on Security Council reform.

I would like to offer my strong support to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his initiatives and leadership in strengthening the United Nations role in peacekeeping and disarmament and in revitalizing the Secretariat, and for his determination to ensure that the United Nations system is managed more coherently and effectively.

Exercising the authority of President of the General Assembly requires investing every effort to live up to the ideals and values of the United Nations. I can assure the Assembly that I will discharge my duties in a balanced, considered and forthright manner, with the utmost respect for the dignity of every single Member State.

Multilateralism is rooted deeply in the history of mankind. Let me illustrate this point by quoting the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle.

> "Now, we may say that the most important subjects about which all men deliberate and deliberating orators harangue are five in number: ways and means, war and peace, the defence of the country, imports and exports, and legislation."

The world needs, more than ever, effective multilateralism. The United Nations must be at the centre of this. For the General Assembly, this means that we must deal as much as possible with substance. Revitalization is much more than procedural improvements.

The major challenges of our times transcend borders: globalization, climate change, terrorism, immigration and sustainable development cannot be entirely solved within national borders or at the regional level.

The United Nations has experienced failures. The main causes of this should, however, not always be sought in the deficiencies inherent in the United Nations system, but at times in the lack of political will of individual Member States to cooperate within the multilateral framework.

(*spoke in French*)

Today, when we speak of governance we are of course speaking of Governments, but we are also speaking of citizens. In this sphere, the kingly era of negotiation purely among States has passed. The future of the planet is everybody's business. Sustainable development must be a democratic, inclusive and participatory undertaking.

Tomorrow's governance — democratic governance — should involve decision makers at all levels. A credible reform plan must not be the plan of a past generation: international governance of the environment should follow the pattern of the democratic spirit that underlies the mission of the General Assembly.

(*spoke in English*)

Scientists and experts have now told us the inconvenient truth about global warming. In this regard, I would like to praise the recent work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Now it is up to politics, business and civil society to take over. Climate change has implications for every aspect of our daily life from the environment, health and energy to economic development, human rights, peace and

security and global governance. While the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the negotiating framework on climate change, in terms of comprehensive action the General Assembly should be the forum for concerted action. The debate must focus on the links between technological innovation, renewable energy and the environment. Together, we can tackle climate change and achieve dynamic economic growth and sustainable development.

As we reach the midpoint to 2015 we must accelerate our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is clear that many will not be reached. Particularly in Africa, achieving the MDGs is not solely a test of our ability to deliver on commitments; it is above all a test of our moral obligations and the ethical values that are enshrined in the United Nations Charter. To achieve those and other development goals we should demand more of ourselves as well as of the Organization. If the United Nations is going to make its full contribution and better serve the needs of developing countries, greater system-wide coordination and coherence will be necessary.

I see these among other priorities for the sixty-second session: reviewing progress in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy; preparing for the Second Global Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Doha, and the commemorative meeting on children; and defining further concrete steps towards a reformed Security Council — a vital aspect of the overall United Nations reform agenda. In addition, because there is increasing urgency to develop a sense of respect for the Other, which can provide a basis for mutual understanding, friendship and peace, we must continue to make further progress in promoting dialogue among civilizations during the sixty-second session.

I see the future and the relevance of the United Nations as an organization that is based on open networks, and as a network that engages with ideas from civil society, non-governmental organizations, business, universities, the media and the global public.

Whether we like it or not, in some areas we are confronted with widening gaps on issues that are vital to the future relevance of the Organization. We all have a responsibility to tirelessly seek out bold compromises based on greater mutual respect. After all, we all share the common ideal of living in a safer, more prosperous world.

I am aware that compromise is not the most resounding of battle cries. In this regard, I am reminded of the famous German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who once said, "Out of the crooked timber of humanity no straight thing was ever made". This is, in my opinion, why we have to deal with the knots.

In this common endeavour, we are fortunate to have some of the brightest and most able diplomats in the world based here at United Nations in New York. To them I pledge my conscience, my compassion and my capabilities.

The Assembly's decision today is recognition of my country's commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter, including its contribution to fostering greater stability and cooperation in South-Eastern Europe. In fact, my country has been actively involved with the United Nations since its inception in 1945.

Fellow members of the Assembly, on behalf of my country, the Republic of Macedonia, and myself I thank you.

The President: I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I am honoured to offer my warm congratulations to Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his election by acclamation as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. As a seasoned diplomat, a prolific scholar and a successful businessman, Mr. Kerim will bring a wealth of experience and talent to leading the work of the General Assembly and making it more effective.

Through this early election, pursuant to relevant General Assembly resolutions, Mr. Kerim and his team will have time to prepare for the upcoming session of the General Assembly and come to grips with the many and complex issues facing the Organization. And this will allow Mr. Kerim to benefit from the steadfast support, wisdom and dedication of your leadership, Madam President, as I myself was fortunate enough to do before I assumed my office and have been since.

In our complex and fast-changing world, the work of the United Nations is becoming increasingly indispensable. The stronger the cooperation among the

principal organs of the United Nations, the better we will be able to meet the expectations and fulfil the hopes of millions of people around the world, people whom we exist to serve.

The role of the General Assembly is vital to our work. It is needed to implement the most essential reforms and to adapt the Organization to the realities of the twenty-first century. It is needed to accelerate progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

The United Nations and its Member States, with the strong support of non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector, must spare no effort in confronting these challenges together. Our cooperation needs to extend to all the major issues before us — from fighting terrorism to bringing the benefits of globalization to all the world's people; from promoting and protecting human rights to strengthening the Organization's overall coherence and its capacity in peacekeeping operations; as well as disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Kerim, allow me to assure you that you will have my full support and cooperation both during this transition period and throughout your tenure. We will need to work closely together to complete the reforms under way and to address the challenges ahead. Congratulations once again.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now call on the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): I have the honour to express, on behalf of the Group of African States, our warmest congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his election as President of the General Assembly for its sixty-second session. His nomination by the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, his endorsement by the Eastern European Group and his election today by the General Assembly are recognition of his achievements in the international arena and of the stature of his country in the international community. They also attest to the confidence that we have bestowed on his leadership and his capability to steer the work of the sixty-second session to a fruitful conclusion.

The President-elect, His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim, brings with him a wealth of experience at the international level. In particular, his expertise in the areas of international politics, international economics and youth leadership will, without a doubt, prove to be of great value to the work of the United Nations as we continue to work on the transformation of our Organization to make it more efficient, more relevant and more responsive to today's needs, challenges and aspirations.

The African Group would also like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to you, Ms. Al-Khalifa, as current President, for your leadership, dedication and commitment to the work of the General Assembly. We wish you all the best in your future endeavours. You have made landmark decisions and have initiated animated debates where there had been impasse and indecision on various issues, including the unfinished agenda of United Nations reform. You have left a memorable legacy of outstanding gender-based leadership from a developing country. Your contribution to the revitalization of the General Assembly is an added milestone in restoring the authority and vitality of this body.

The task ahead of us at the sixty-second session as we continue to deliberate on United Nations reform, as well as the high-level meeting that we expect to undertake, will no doubt be challenging. Through you, Madam President, the African Group thus assures the President-elect, His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim, that he can count on the Group's support and cooperation in his efforts. We look forward to a close working relationship with the President-elect.

The President: I now call on the representative of Sri Lanka, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

Mr. Kariyawasam (Sri Lanka): On behalf of the Group of Asian States, I have the honour to express warm wishes and congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on his election as President of the General Assembly for its sixty-second session. Ambassador Kerim is no stranger to the United Nations system, having served as Permanent Representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the United Nations in New York after several high-level diplomatic assignments representing his country. We

have no doubt that he will work assiduously to further the purposes and principles of the United Nations with renewed vigour.

Ambassador Kerim reached the prime of his distinguished career in diplomacy when he was appointed as Foreign Minister of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2000. He brings with him not only a wealth of diplomatic and political experience, but an impressive array of achievements as an expert in international economics and as an academic. His distinguished career spans three decades at very high levels, running through momentous social and political changes in the region from which he comes.

Having sharpened his diplomatic skills through such invaluable experiences, Ambassador Kerim is well equipped to guide the Assembly at this critical juncture of the Organization. The Asian Group is confident that Mr. Kerim's election today as President of the General Assembly will help to maintain the momentum of the United Nations reform process and to advance further consensus-based action through his experience, wisdom and ability.

I should like, on behalf of the Asian Group, to pledge to the President-elect, Ambassador Kerim, our commitment to constructive engagement and to providing him with our fullest cooperation as he guides us, the Member States, through the complex and challenging tasks that are before us.

It is also with profound gratitude and deep appreciation that I thank you, Ms. Al-Khalifa, for your dedication and strong commitment in conducting the arduous tasks entrusted to you during your presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. Your able leadership and personal commitment, as well as your amiable nature and pleasant disposition, have contributed to your remarkable ability to build consensus and to steer the General Assembly in the right direction to achieve successful outcomes during a critical period. As the third woman elected President of the Assembly, you have vindicated the faith that we, the Member States, bestowed upon you by ably leading us during a critical juncture for the United Nations. Madam President, the Asian Group is proud of you. On behalf of the Group, I take this opportunity to thank you most profoundly and to express to you our sincere best wishes in all your future endeavours.

The President: I now call on the representative of Latvia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mrs. Silkalna (Latvia): On behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, I wish to warmly congratulate Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his election to the post of President of the General Assembly for its sixty-second session.

We believe that Mr. Kerim's considerable diplomatic and political experience, as well as his knowledge of the United Nations, will ensure a confident, dynamic presidency at the sixty-second session. We note with approval that the incoming President intends to focus on issues of current concern to the international community, including climate change and terrorism. We will also look to Mr. Kerim's energetic leadership in our efforts towards reforms that will make our Organization more efficient and effective.

The Group of Eastern European States is particularly pleased to see one of its members take the helm of the General Assembly. The Group, which has more than doubled in size in recent years, has much to offer to the United Nations. Our Group is diverse, with roots in the East and the West, the North and the South. We can be sure that the incoming President will reach out to all regions, listen to all regions and find the common threads that keep the United Nations united.

We pledge our full support and cooperation to Mr. Kerim during the sixty-second session. At the same time, we thank you, Madam President, for your tireless efforts and look forward to working with you in the remaining months of the current session.

The President: I now call on the representative of Jamaica, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica): I have the honour, on behalf of the members of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, to join other delegations in expressing sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his election to the high office of President of the General Assembly for the sixty-second session.

This consummate diplomat brings with him a keen knowledge of global affairs and a wealth of diplomatic experience gained through distinguished

service to his country, including, most notably, his former assignments as Minister for Foreign Affairs and as Permanent Representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the United Nations in New York. We are therefore confident that, as he undertakes the complex and challenging task of guiding the affairs of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session, he will successfully deploy his considerable diplomatic skills in advancing the work of the Assembly and in ensuring that we can achieve productive and fruitful results from our deliberations.

Indeed, Mr. Kerim assumes the presidency at a critical juncture in the history of the United Nations, particularly as the issue of reform remains a significant item on the United Nations agenda. However, his illustrious career makes him eminently qualified and well prepared to take up this mantle and to build on the foundation that has been laid by his predecessor, Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, during the sixty-first session.

At this juncture, permit me to express to you, Madam President, our profound appreciation for the commitment and dedication that you have shown as you have tackled the myriad and multidimensional challenges that you have confronted during your tenure. We wish you every success in your future endeavours.

In concluding, let me again congratulate Ambassador Kerim and express to him our warmest welcome to the presidency of the General Assembly. We, the members of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, assure him of our full support and cooperation as we work together to ensure the success of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

The President: I now call on the representative of Portugal, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Lobo de Mesquita (Portugal): In my capacity as Chair of the Group of Western European and other States, I would like to warmly congratulate His Excellency Ambassador Srgjan Kerim of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on his election as President of the General Assembly for the sixty-second session. Ambassador Kerim's election is not just a personal honour, but a demonstration of the high esteem in which the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is held by the United Nations.

Ambassador Kerim will assume the presidency at a time when the United Nations continues to face many challenges. We in the General Assembly are fortunate to be able to call on the considerable skills and experience that he has accumulated during his distinguished career as a leading economist, diplomat and politician. I would like to assure Ambassador Kerim that he can rely on the fullest support of the Group of Western European and other States in carrying out his responsibilities.

On such occasions, it is customary to thank the President-in-office of the General Assembly for his or her stewardship during the current session. Madam President, your personal leadership has been fundamental in securing the significant achievements that have already marked the sixty-first session, especially regarding the reform process under way at the United Nations. We know and expect that during the more than three months that remain in your term of office, you will be urging us to make further progress. We look forward to working with you in that common endeavour so that, when Ambassador Kerim assumes the presidency of the General Assembly in September, we can address the future of the United Nations in confidence and unity.

The President: I wish to inform the Assembly that after the adjournment of this meeting, there will be an opportunity for members to express their congratulations to the President-elect, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, in the Indonesian Lounge.

We have thus concluded our consideration of agenda item 4.

Drawing of lots for the seating protocol for the sixty-second regular session

The President: As announced in the *Journal*, we will now proceed to the drawing of lots to determine which Member State will occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall at the sixty-second session. In accordance with the established practice, the Secretary-General will draw the name of one Member State from a box containing the names of the States members of the General Assembly. The delegation whose name has been drawn will occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall, and the other countries will follow in English alphabetical order. The same order will be observed in the Main Committees.

I now invite the Secretary-General to proceed with the drawing of lots.

Having been drawn by lot by the Secretary-General, Mexico was chosen to occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall at the sixty-second session.

The President: Before adjourning the meeting, I wish to inform members that the election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly for the sixty-second session will be held at a later date to be announced.

I also wish to inform members that, immediately after the adjournment of this meeting, consecutive meetings of the First Committee, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and the Second, Third, Fifth and Sixth Committees will be held in this Hall to elect the members of their Bureaux.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.